

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MOSCOW 02613 221908Z

64

ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NEA-07 IO-03 DEAE-00 NSC-10

NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 AGR-03 AID-10

TRSE-00 L-02 JUSE-00 OMB-01 SCI-03 SNM-02 EB-03 IGA-01

DRC-01 /082 W

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R 221450Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6350

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T MOSCOW 2613

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS (2)

TAGS: SNAR, UR, IN, NL

SUBJECT: OPIUM REQUIREMENTS OF USSR

GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR VANCE

REF: A. STATE A-861; B. REQUIREMENT C-DI-3-57230, SUPPLEMENT

1; C. MOSCOW 2042; D. NEW DELHI 2268; E. WELLMAN-TECH

LETTER DATED JANUARY 24, 1974.

1. EMBASSY HAS VERY LITTLE HARD INFORMATION ON SOVIET OPIUM PRODUCTION AND REQUIREMENTS. DURING GENERAL CONVERSATION ON SOVIET-INDIAN TRADE AT RECENT RECEPTION, INDIAN ECONOMIC COUNSELOR CONFIRMED THAT OPIUM WAS INCLUDED IN LIST OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS EXPORTED TO USSR AND QUOTED VOLUME OF USSR IMPORTS FROM INDIA AS ABOUT 100 METRIC TONS OF OPIUM

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 02613 221908Z

GUM ANNUALLY. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT INDIA WAS HAVING

DIFFICULTY IN MEETING AGREED COMMITMENTS BECAUSE OF POOR HARVESTS AND RECALLED THAT THE SOVIETS NEARLY "PANICKED" LAST YEAR WHEN IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT INDIA COULD NOT MEET ITS EXPORT COMMITMENT. HE SAID THAT SOVIET MEDICINAL REQUIREMENTS FOR OPIATES EXCEED CURRENT SOVIET DOMESTIC PRODUCTION, AND THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO BUY ALL OPIUM GUM INDIA CAN SPARE. HE ADDED THAT SOVIETS HAVE REQUESTED AS MUCH AS 200 METRIC TONS ANNUALLY, IF AVAILABLE. THIS WOULD INDICATE THAT SOVIETS HAVE NO INTENTION, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM, OF STOPPING IMPORTS OF INDIAN OPIUM (PARA 4, REF A), AND THAT THIS ADDITIONAL STRAIN ON WORLD SUPPLIES WILL PROBABLY NOT BE RELIEVED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

2. AS DEPARTMENT KNOWS FROM INCB REPORT FOR 1973 AND OTHER SOURCES (REF E), PROCESSING OF POPPY STRAW FOR EXTRACTION OF MORPHINE HAS INCREASED IN USSR OVER PAST SEVERAL YEARS, WHILE OPIUM PRODUCTION HAS DECLINED. HOWEVER, COMBINED TOTAL OF DOMESTIC OPIUM PRODUCTION AND INDIAN IMPORTS FOR 1972 (EACH ABOUT 115 TONS) WAS ROUGHLY EQUAL TO OPIUM AVAILABLE FROM USSR DOMESTIC SOURCES ALONE IN 1970. SOVIET RAW OPIUM NEEDS HAVE THUS REMAINED FAIRLY CONSTANT DESPITE INCREASED STRAW PROCESSING. IT PROBABLY IS NOT CORRECT, THEREFORE, TO ASCRIBE RECENT DECREASE IN DOMESTIC OPIUM PRODUCTION SOLELY TO POLICY DECISION DIRECTED TOWARDS SUBSTITUTION OF POPPY STRAW FOR OPIUM GUM FROM INCISED PODS AS SOURCE OF OPIATES, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF CONTINUING STRAW EXPORTS AND OF BABAYAN'S RECENT STATEMENT (REF C) THAT CURRENT STRAW PROCESSING TECHNOLOGY, WHILE YIELDING MORPHINE AND CODEINE, DOES NOT PERMIT EXTRACTION OF CERTAIN OTHER DERIVATIVES OBTAINABLE ONLY FROM GUM OPIUM. FOR RELIEF OF SHORT WORLD SUPPLY OF LICIT OPIUM, IT MAY THEREFORE BECOME NECESSARY TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF ENCOURAGING SOVIETS TO INCREASE THE ACREAGE OF THEIR OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION, ESPECIALLY SINCE USSR IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER SOURCE COUNTRIES APPEARS EQUALLY OR BETTER EQUIPPED TO CONTROL PRODUCTION AND PREVENT ILLICIT DIVERSION. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT SOWN AREA FOR LICIT POPPY CULTIVATION IN INDIA IS ABOUT FIVE TIMES LARGER THAN THAT IN USSR. ACCORDING TO 1973 REPORT OF USSR CENTRAL STATISTICAL ADMINISTRATION, TOTAL AREA SOWN IN USSR FOR OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION IS ABOUT 43,000 HECTARES. BROKEN DOWN BY SOVIET

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 02613 221908Z

REPUBLICS, SOWN AREAS IN 1972 AND 1973 WERE, IN THOUSANDS OF HECTARES:

	(1972)	(1973)
RUSSIA	23.69	23.13
UKRAINE	9.60	8.61
KAZAKHSTAN	7.17	6.97
MOLDAVIA	0.32	0.40
KIRGHIZ	3.02	3.77

STANDARD REFERENCE SOURCES CITE KIRGHIZ AND KAZAKHSTAN AS THE PRIMARY AREAS FOR OPIUM PRODUCTION. POPPY CULTIVATION IN OTHER AREAS IS ALMOST ENTIRELY DEVOTED TO POPPY OIL AND SEED PRODUCTION, ALTHOUGH SOME POPPY STRAW FROM THESE AREAS MAY BE HARVESTED FOR EXTRACTION OF RESIDUAL MORPHINE. BASED UPON ABOVE FIGURES, WE MAY PROBABLY RATHER ACCURATELY ESTIMATE TOTAL AREA FOR OPIUM GUM HARVESTING TO BE ABOUT 10,000 HECTARES. TAKING THE 114 TON OPIUM PRODUCTION FIGURE FOR 1972 FROM 1973 INCB REPORT, WE ARRIVE AT AVERAGE YIELD OF ABOUT 11 KG/HA, WHICH ACCORDING TO SOME AVAILABLE FIGURES WOULD BE ABOUT HALF OF WHAT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED A NORMAL MINIMUM YIELD IN AFGHANISTAN.

STOESSEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NARCOTICS, OPIUM, DRUG CONTROL, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, EXPORT CONTROLS, FOREIGN COMMITMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: rowelle0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MOSCOW02613
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740215/aaaaaojn.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: A. STATE A-861; B. REQUIREMENT C-DI-, 3-57230, SUPPLEMENT
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: rowelle0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 APR 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <30-Sep-2002 by rowelle0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OPIUM REQUIREMENTS OF USSR GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR VANCE
TAGS: SNAR, UR, IN, NL, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005